

- 10 Favorite Castles
- Swissair Packages
- Christmas Market Tour
- Camping in Europe

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

July 28, 1996

Innocents Abroad

One day in late May we drove youngest son Andy, 25, and Margaret, his 'significant other,' to the San Francisco Airport. They were headed for Frankfurt to begin a 16-day camping tour of Germany and Switzerland. Andy had been to Europe with us for a few days when he was 15 and Margaret had not been at all. As we said good-bye at the security checkpoint I'm not sure which couple was more excited, Andy and Margaret or Liz and me.

In addition to being his first 'solo' European trip, it was to be Andy's first travel writing assignment. Camping is a way of seeing our three countries which *Gemütlichkeit* has never addressed so it was logical that he would scout out the territory. His credentials consisted of a short tour of duty as a reservations agent for Southwest Airlines, numerous hiking and camping trips in California and the Pacific Northwest, two years of high school German and three years of working in the *Gemütlichkeit* offices.

So, herewith the debut of Andy Bestor as a *Gemütlichkeit* contributor. His report not only provides insights into what it's like to see Europe from a tent, it also provokes memories of being young and experiencing the wonder and excitement of one's own first European trip. There's useful information here — along with a lot of pizza, beer and fun. — RHB

The Car

After the on-time arrival of our Lufthansa flight from San Francisco, we followed the *Mietwagen* signs to the Sixt-Budget counter. There, the courteous agent made clear all the conditions of the rental, gave us

Continued on page 2...

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

The Travel Letter for Germany, Austria, Switzerland & the New Europe

CASTLES

Perhaps the most romantic of Europe's attractions are its thousands of castles. Here are 10 of our favorites.

Americans have a fascination for castles. These mystical, fairy-tale structures are everywhere in children's literature, referred to in popular songs, and are even the basis for advertising themes — for decades an enduring Disney symbol has been its look-alike of Bavaria's Neuschwanstein.

Maybe part of the reason we like them is that we don't have any. Americans have to be content with Grayline tours of exclusive Beverly Hills neighborhoods, Elvis Presley's Graceland, or historic dwellings like Montecello, Mt. Vernon and the White House.

But these are not castles. No, castles were, in football terms, two-way players; both defense and offense. Their principal purpose was not only to keep out intruders and provide a safe refuge for those who

lived within, but to be a weapons system, a fortified dwelling which functioned as a secure base for the operations of an army. Heavily armoured men on horseback rode out from them on missions of both defense, to protect the surrounding countryside, and offense, to secure new land or otherwise advance the political and financial interests of the castle's owner.

**Schloss Spangenberg**

However, not all of Europe's castles, perhaps not even most, fulfilled such a role. For example, the flamboyant Bavarian King, Ludwig II, built his castles — Neuschwanstein, Linderhof and Herrenchiemsee — in the second half of the 19th century, long after the feudal system in which castles were little kingdoms requiring private armies to maintain their influence. But peaceful countryside or not, rich men continued to build houses that looked like and were called castles. The

Continued on page 3...

READERS' FORUM

The Postman Cometh

We open envelopes containing your letters with almost as much relish as those bearing your renewal checks. Over the years, your suggestions have been a valuable source of hotels to be visited and reviewed and off-the-beaten track places to investigate. And, of course, we are always anxious to hear your reaction, positive or negative, to what is written in *Gemütlichkeit*.

There are no established guidelines as to which letters get printed and which do not. All are read with great interest but when it comes to putting them in *Gemütlichkeit*, we lean toward short, to-the-point letters which recommend hotels and restaurants and include addresses and phone numbers. Equally welcome are how-to letters and letters about off-the-beaten track and little-known tourist attractions and things to do. Sometimes we can take a long, rambling letter and extract items we think will be of interest to the general readership.

But whether you write long and detailed, and print it on a laser printer, or scrawl a couple of lines on a paper napkin, we genuinely want to hear from you.

This month we have chosen a single letter. It is from Nelson and Sharon Helm, longtime subscribers from Grand Island, Nebraska. Though not short, it is to the
Continued on page 5...

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

directions to the car and handed us the keys. We were off.

Happy to be underway, we hit the Autobahn in our black 1996 VW Golf. To our delight it was equipped with a sunroof and tape deck, an upgrade from the Opel Corsa we had expected and paid for.

The Anker

Since we planned to sleep virtually every night in a tent, my father and mother had arranged for our first night at one of their favorite hotels — one way out of our budget league. So, exhausted from the flight, we set out for Marktheidenfeld and our first-night's accommodations at the **Hotel Anker** (tel. 09391/60040, fax 09391/600477, rooms 108 DM/\$72 to 320 DM/\$213).

After a short drive east on the A3 Autobahn we arrived at the town and had no trouble finding the Anker. A hotel staff member opened the front gate to let us through, closed it behind us, then led the car through the courtyard to a private parking lot. Next, we were shown to a bi-level SUITE! With its tower entry, spiral staircase, elegant antique furniture and balcony overlooking the quiet courtyard, it is probably the best room in town. After a walk around town and something to eat we returned to our fine room and slept well. Breakfast, too, was great. The staff and accommodations at this fine hotel combined to kickoff our trip with a bang.

After being spoiled by the Anker, it was back to the real world. In Wertheim early the next morning the grey sky contrasted beautifully with the deep green trees and grasses. The castle at Wertheim was very peaceful at 8:00 a.m. and we hiked up, strolled the grounds and took a few photos. On our descent to the town we wandered into the church and gasped at the beauty of the woodwork all around, and the enormity of the pipe organ. Following our short visit to Wertheim we headed to Rothenburg o. d. Tauber, where we planned to camp.

Rothenburg

We were pleased with our first European camp site; flat grassy areas with plenty of room to park the car next to the tent. All campgrounds on our trip had a small store and laundry facilities. They were also equipped with very clean toilets and showers. Showers in some places are free, in others you must pay 1 DM (\$.67) for hot water. This campground, **Romantik Tauber**, nestles between the Tauber River and the Romantik Road, less than a kilometer from a parking lot outside the *Altstadt*. For two persons in a tent of their own, plus parking, the price per night was 23 DM (\$15.33), a sweet deal!

Next morning the weather was perfect and we went to town early in search of breakfast pastry. We stopped at the first *Bäckerei* we saw. Then, armed with a bag of sweet delights such as *Schoko-Croissants* and assorted fruit-filled pastries, we meandered through the historic walled city before the tour busses arrived. The town was calm and quiet, the locals went about their morning routines, sweeping sidewalks and shopping at the *Metzgerei* and *Bäckerei*. Most had a smile and a *Guten Morgen* for us as we passed.

After our morning walk and breakfast, we decided on a day trip to Dinkelsbühl via the Romantik Road. We were amazed at the close proximity of the small towns along this road and discussed the possibility of biking or walking the Romantik Road from town to town. At Dinkelsbühl we parked the car and toured the city on foot until the call of hunger took over. We stopped at a *Metzgerei* for the first time, not sure what to expect. We found sandwiches of fresh sunflower seed rolls with fresh ham, cheese, lettuce, tomato and cucumber. No mayo or mustard to make the wonderful bread turn to mush. Margaret and I found this to be the best way to have lunch and save money for an evening of good German food and beer. For two sandwiches and some juice we usually paid around 10 DM (\$.67).

Just outside the wall is a lovely pond with benches under shady trees. We sat under one such tree, on one such bench, and watched an older German man work in his garden on the opposite

shore. We watched ducks and swans glide across the glass-like pond, and ate our lunch. After that we explored the cobblestone streets and poked our heads into countless little shops. The Romantik Road and the town of Dinkelsbühl made a great day-trip.

On our return, we found that the campground, nearly empty when we left that morning, was now almost full. What appeared to be a church group was moving in next to us. With a mess tent, five or six vehicles and several sleeping tents, they took several hours to set up. We spent the late afternoon lying in the sun on a blanket, observing the massive move-in operation.

That evening we dined at **Pizzeria Roma**, Galgengasse 19, which serves large helpings of pasta, good pizzas and traditional dishes like *Wienerschnitzel*. Dinner here was about 40 DM (\$27) including a salad and two beers apiece. After dinner it was more strolling the town.

Rain on the Roof

At camp that night we enjoyed a game of scrabble. At bedtime it was still clear and warm, but that would not last long. Around midnight we awoke to the sound of thunder. It was in the distance but moving closer. By 1:00 a.m. "it" had arrived. With wind, heavy rain and "Donner und Blitzen," it was one exciting night. The group next to us, despite all their equipment, could not stay dry. We sat calmly in our tent listening to the sound of feet splashing in the puddles that the rain had so quickly created. At one point the thunder seemed to shake the earth beneath us.

Next morning we woke to a soaked campground and many campers had been forced to abandon their tents for their cars. Thanks to our Eureka! brand tent we were dry inside and ready to pack up and go. We paid the 46 DM (\$31) for the two night stay and headed for our next destination.

After one last breakfast in Rothenburg, we were off to Heidelberg and around noon arrived at the campground **Haide Heidelberg**. With cabin rentals available and skies threatening, we rented

Continued on page 7...

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

Rating Scale	Scale	Hotel Rating Criteria	
Excellent	16 - 20	People/Service	30%
Above Average	12 - 15	Location/Setting	15%
Average	8 - 11	Guestrooms	30%
Adequate	4 - 7	Public rooms	5%
Unacceptable	0 - 3	Facilities/Restaurant	20%

Value Rating	Scale	Restaurant Criteria	
Outstanding Value	17 - 20	Food	65%
Very Good Value	12 - 16	Service	20%
Average Value	9 - 11	Atmosphere	15%
Below Average Value	5 - 8		
A Rip-Off	0 - 4		

Special Designation

By virtue of location, decor, charm, warmth of management, or combination thereof, an especially pleasant establishment.

CASTLES

Continued from page 1

newer ones just had indoor plumbing and no army.

Then, sometime around the middle of this century, castles, or parts of castles, began to be turned into hotels. If one couldn't own a castle at least one could sleep in one for a few nights. Next came the various associations of "castle hotels" and the definition of just what is a castle got lost. Only a few such hotels are in what were actually feudal castles and some are simply in interesting, old buildings. Even a small hunting lodge once owned by someone with a few drops of royal blood seems to qualify as a "Schloss" hotel. This is not to denigrate such hotels; **Landhaus Hubertushof** (tel. 06152/71280) in Althaussee, in Austria's Salzkammergut, is one of our favorite country hotels, but it is no more a castle than the **Heidelberg Holiday Inn**.

So, for us at least, the best castles are the real castles. The ones where, if you listen closely, you can hear the horses hooves clattering over the drawbridge and where you can smell the boiling oil as it is poured from the ramparts over attackers scaling the walls.

In Germany, Austria and Switzerland there are hundreds of castles, near castles and castle hotels.

Setting aside the most famous — many of which are must-see tourist attractions like Chillon near Montreux, Ludwig's extravagant trio in Bavaria and the Heidelberg castle — here are some of our favorites. If the castle itself is not a hotel we have suggested nearby accommodations:

Burg Eltz Germany

Where: 10 kilometers from Hatzenport on the Mosel just southwest of Koblenz. Requires about a half-hour walk through the forest.

Map: *Die Generalkarte Deutschland* #12

What: Fantastic, authentic feudal castle dating to the 12th century. Topped by a thicket of turrets and spires. Restored in the 19th century. Interiors are supplied with medieval furnishings. Open April-October.

Offers guided tours.

Hotel Recommendation: A lovely small hotel with a very good restaurant is the Gutshotel on the edge of the village of Neumagen-Dhron, overlooking the Mosel. Ask for the converted attic that occupies the entire top floor.

Gutshotel Des Weingut, Balduinstr. 1, D-54347, Neumagen-Dhron, tel. 06507/20-35, fax 06507/5644. Rooms from 120 to 240 DM (\$80-\$160).

Hohenzollern Germany

Where: South of Stuttgart and west of Freudenstadt, at Hechingen.

Map: *Die Generalkarte Deutschland* #12

What: Huge castle which can be seen for miles on the highest hill (2,799 ft.) around. Built sometime in the 15th century by the Counts of Zollern and reconstructed from the original plans during the period 1850-1867. The Hohenzollern family were Germany's ruling family until 1918 when Kaiser Wilhelm abdicated. Frederick the Great is buried here.

Hotel Recommendation: Hotel Brielhof, on the B27, D-72379, Hechingen, tel. 07471/40 97, 07471/16908. Excellent restaurant. Rooms from 90 to 200 DM (\$59-\$132).

Veste Coburg Germany

Where: City of Coburg, about 215 km east of Frankfurt, 47 km north of Bamberg

Map: *Die Generalkarte Deutschland* #12

What: A massive fortress hovering above the town, fading in and out of the clouds. Martin Luther holed up in this triple-walled citadel for five months in 1530, awaiting his day in court before the Augsburg Imperial Diet. You can tour his apartment and there is an art collection of some note which includes paintings by Rembrandt and Albrecht Dürer. The Veste's museum, Kunstammlungen, is a wonderful surprise, particularly for those exhausted by endless religious paintings by Holbein the Younger or Cranach the Elder. Among the items of special interest is a cabinet with some 20,000 coins and medals, antique wedding carriages

and an extraordinary display of armour and weapons, the largest in Germany.

Hotel Recommendation:

Blankenburg, Rosenauer Strasse 30, D-96450 Coburg, tel. 09561/75005, fax 09561/75674. Rooms 110 to 195 DM (\$38 to \$51).

Schloss Neuhaus, Neuhaus Str. 10, D-96450, Coburg-Neu Neuershof, tel. 09563/20 51, fax 09563/2107. Rooms from 100 to 195 DM (\$73-\$130).

Schloss Spangenberg Germany

Where: Town of Spangenberg, 36 kilometers south of Kassel, just east of the A7 Autobahn.

Map: *Die Generalkarte Deutschland* #11

What: To get a reaction out of first-time travelers to Europe, take them to Schloss Spangenberg on their first night (about 90 minutes from Frankfurt Airport). The 13th century castle perches high above the town and the approach to it, up the winding narrow road, across the wooden bridge, over the moat and through the narrow arch into the courtyard, is positively Disneyesque.

The hotel is not special but comfortable with smaller than average rooms with few luxuries. There is no lift and last time we were there we hauled our own luggage in and out of the hotel. As you can see by the rates, one pays for sleeping in a castle.

The **Ratskeller** in the town has very good food.

Schloss Spangenberg, D-34286, Spangenberg, tel. 05663/8 66, fax 05663/7567. Rooms from 115 to 280 DM (\$76-\$184).

Schloss Waldeck Germany

Where: Waldeck, 57 kilometers southwest of Kassel and about 80 km north of Marburg.

Map: *Die Generalkarte Deutschland* #11

What: One sees few castles that are both tourist attraction and hotel as is the case with Waldeck. The Schloss overlooks a vast lake formed by a dam on the river Eder which, in 1943, was blown up by the British causing a disastrous flood. It houses a museum

Continued on page 4...

GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN

Continued from page 3

and has a Witches' Tower (Hexenturm) and several prison cells.

The somewhat expensive hotel within pays little heed in style and decor to the citadel surrounding it. Lighting, furnishings and floor and wall coverings are all contemporary. The impressive entry emphasizes vaulted stone arches, modern furniture and oriental rugs

Schloss Waldeck, D-34513, Waldeck am Edersee, tel. 05623/589-0, fax 05623/58 92 89. Rooms from 170 to 320 DM (\$112-\$211).

Tarasp

Switzerland

Where: In southeastern Switzerland, 4 kilometers southwest of Scuol.

Map: *Die Generalkarte Switzerland #3*

What: Magnificently positioned Alpine castle near the Austrian border. Best viewed from the Kreuzberg summit. Dates to the 11th century when it was home to the lords of Tarasp. Has passed through the hands of various Swiss and Austrian families and was fully restored at the beginning of this century. Still privately owned by the Grand-Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt, it can be visited during the summer. Check with the tourist office in Scuol or with Swiss Tourism in the USA.

Hotel Recommendation: The expensive but breathtakingly beautiful Schloss-Hotel Chastè (located just below the castle) has some of the most attractive guestrooms we have ever seen. In a region in which wood is commonly used in interior decor, the richness of the Chastè's knotty pine stands out. This is a special hotel. For those who can afford it, Number 136, the two-bedroom "Panorama Suite," with cathedral-beamed ceiling, fireplace and spacious marble bathroom with large corner bathtub under exposed wood joists and wide skylight, is absolutely stunning. The restaurant is annually rated among Switzerland's top 100.

Less expensive accommodations are available in nearby Scuol.

Schloss-Hotel Chastè, CH-7553 Tarasp-Sparsels, tel. 081/864 17 75,

fax 081/864 99 70. Rooms from 128 to 300 Sfr. (\$102-\$240).

Gruyères

Switzerland

Where: In Gruyères, 40 kilometers northeast of Montreux.

Map: *Die Generalkarte Switzerland #2*

What: The 13th century castle is the focal point of this touristy little hilltop town, most of which is located within the castle's fortifications. The castle belonged to the counts of Gruyères who dominated the Sarine valley for 400 years. It was rebuilt after a fire in 1480 and, in 1555, sold to the canton of Fribourg which held it until the Bory family acquired and restored it in the 19th century. In 1938 it was returned to the canton. The castle can be visited from March through October.

Hotel Recommendation: The hospitable little Hostellerie des Chevaliers, a member of the Relais & Châteaux hotel group, is located just outside the gates to the town but no more than a couple of hundred yards from the main square. The antique-filled guestrooms are a bit small but rustically charming. Many have good views of the surrounding countryside. The restaurant is very good but expensive.

A cheaper, simpler choice is the 14-room Hôtel de Ville in the town center.

Hostellerie des Chevaliers, CH-1663 Gruyères, tel. 029/61933, fax 029/62552. Rooms from 160 to 260 Sfr. (\$128-\$208).

Hôtel de Ville, CH-1663 Gruyères, tel. 029/62424, fax 029/63628. Rooms from 130 to 150 Sfr. (\$104-\$120).

Spiez

Switzerland

Where: In Spiez, on the south shore of Lake Thun, 18 kilometers from Interlaken.

Map: *Die Generalkarte Switzerland #2*

What: The castle sits on a raised bit of ground that juts into the lake. Built in the 12th and 13th centuries and added to several times since then, some of its rooms — notably the *Festsaal* and the museum — can be visited year round. Climb the tower for a magnificent view.

Hotel Recommendation: The Hotel des Alpes is in the center of town and

offers great views of the lake and mountains, especially from the large terrace. The restaurant offers good meals for less than 20 Sfr. (\$16).

Hotel des Alpes, Seestr. 38, CH-3700, tel. 033/543354, fax 033/548850. Rooms from 75 to 170 Sfr. (\$60-\$136).

Matzen

Austria

Where: Brixlegg, in the Tyrol, about 30 minutes northeast of Innsbruck, just off the A12 Autobahn.

Map: *Die Generalkarte Austria #7*

What: Here's a castle you won't find in any guide books. Genuine, romantic and obscure is Schloss Matzen, now owned by Californians Christopher Kump and his wife Margaret Fox, co-owners of the popular Cafe Beaujolais in Mendocino, California. Matzen is a crumbling, drafty, but wonderfully authentic relic right out of a 1940s Frankenstein movie. Beautifully restored it is not; the castle, which dates to the 12th century and has always been in private hands, is as it has been for decades — perhaps centuries — and that is the secret of its charm. Set on a little hill at the edge of a forest and topped by a circular Roman watch tower, the 50-room stone building is full of massive tile stoves, inlaid wooden chests, carved marble doorways and intricately wrought iron hinges and locks. Most of the furnishings are very old and therefore sometimes more than a little frayed at the edges.

Matzen's owners recently took the plunge and turned a portion of their castle, which has been in Christopher Kump's family since 1957, into a hotel — at least part-time. The couple first received guests last June and will do so again during October and in February and June of '97, when they can be on hand to meet guests and conduct detailed tours.

There are 10 rooms, all with central heating, telephone and private bath, ranging in price from \$120 to \$200, two nights minimum. It appears the bedrooms were first furnished early in this century when Teddy Roosevelt was a frequent visitor and later modernized — notably the plumbing — in the 50s when the Kump family purchased the property.

Call the number below to book what will assuredly be an unusual castle/hotel stay.

Schloss Matzen, A-6230 Brixlegg, tel. 707-937-0618. Rooms from \$120 to \$200.

Dürnstein

Austria

Where: Dürnstein, seven kilometers west of Krems, in the Wachau valley on the Danube.

Map: *Die Generalkarte Austria #1*

What: The ruins of this medieval fortress sit dramatically on a cliff overlooking the left bank of the Danube. The Kneuringer family is said to have built this and the nearby castle at Aggstein early in the 12th century. The Dürnstein castle is famous as the place where Richard I (the Lionhearted) of England was imprisoned and held for ransom by Duke Leopold V of Austria as Richard returned from the Third Crusade, and where he was discovered by the minstrel Blondel. It functioned as a castle until 1645 when it was captured by the Swedes.

The ruins can be visited daily, though it is rather a steep climb.

Recommended Hotel: The Hotel Schloss Dürnstein is one of Austria's best known "castle" hotels. It's charm is undeniable, but unfortunately the restaurant is a disappointment and the service spotty.

A far less expensive alternative is on the main highway (Red Road #3 on the east side of the river) at Aggsbach, about 20 kilometers up river toward Melk. The Gasthof und Pension zum Kranz has plain country food and comfortable rooms with toilet and shower but no phone or TV. Some rooms have balconies with views of the river.

Hotel Schloss Dürnstein, A-3601 Dürnstein, tel. 02711/212, fax 02711/351. Rooms 950 to 4400 AS (\$76 to \$352).

Gasthof und Pension zum Kranz, A-3641 Aggsbach-Markt, tel. 02712/210. Rooms from 260 to 620 AS (\$21 to \$50). ☒

READERS' FORUM

Continued from page 1

point and deals with several issues of interest: the quality of hotels in the former East Germany; inexpensive

German hotels; affordable lodgings for a week in Berlin and the answer to a question often posed to us — how does one rent a Porsche in Germany without taking a second mortgage on the house.

Germany Diary

We just returned from a month's independent tour to northern and eastern German areas and would like to share some of our experiences and hotel finds.

A good example of the friendly, helpful people we met was the owner of a small auto repair shop who helped us find our destination by photocopying a detailed local road map which he then marked with the route to our hotel. How many of us would have taken the time to offer such assistance in our home areas?

We began at a favorite stop, the **Jagdhaus Heede** (Hermammshager Str. 81, tel. 5541/2395, fax 5541/5133) on the edge of Hann. Münden. This is by a forest preserve on the outskirts of town and is extremely quiet. Cost was 110 DM (\$73) double with breakfast buffet. Münden has much to offer without the normal crush of tourists.

For our visit to Hamburg we chose another quiet location about 20 km northeast of the city near the village of Lutjensee. The **Fischerklause** (Am See 1, tel. 4154/7165, fax 4154/75185) overlooks a small lake, has comfortable rooms and breakfast buffet for 150 DM (\$100) double B&B. It is an easy commute into Hamburg to see the harbor and other sights.

It is well worth a morning to visit the city of Lübeck with its imposing Holstentor and historic old town. Its old residential quarter is inviting even by today's best planning standards. That evening we stayed on the Plonsee in the village of Dersau. The **Zur Mühle am See** (Dorfstr. 47, tel. 4526/8345, fax. 4526/1403) has a quiet position on this lovely lake, delicious food and a breakfast buffet for 130 DM (\$87) double.

Schleswig, between Kiel and Flensburg in the far north, is a charming small city off the normal tourist route. We stayed at **Waldhotel am Schloss** (Stampfühle 1, tel. 4621/23288, fax. 4621/23289, doubles 150 DM/\$100). This is a block from

Schloss Gottorf and a simple drive into the heart of the city where there is no fee for parking.

From here we drove Flensburg by way of Kiel and spent half a day wandering this most interesting city. **Hansens Brauerei**, on the main pedestrian street, brews excellent beers to have with a light lunch. Flensburg has a lively harbor and deserves more time than we gave it.

We're still not sure what everyone does on the east coast in this area but most holiday apartments in the area near Ockholm were occupied. We stayed at the **Gaststätte Bongsiel** (tel. 4674/1445, fax 4674/1458) in a rural location on a canal and didn't see a soul until evening. Our room was small, neat and tidy with full facilities and one of the better bargains on the trip at 90 DM (\$60) double B&B. The crowd at the evening meal attested to the good reputation of the place.

In the historic city of Schwerin, our next stop, we chose **Seehotel Frankenhurst** (Frankenhurst 5, tel. 385/555071, fax 385/555073) located about 9 km north of the city on a quiet lake. We spent three nights here to see Schwerin, with its Schloss-Insel, and Wismar, about 20 km to the north. The Frankenhurst gave us a large remodeled room and an excellent breakfast buffet. At dinner, there was a good choice of items and the food was very good. We paid 150 DM (\$100) double B&B.

The seaside resort of Warnemünde was our next stop and we selected the **Hotel Stolteraa** (Strandweg 17, tel. 381/54320, fax 381/5432151) because of its location adjacent to the beach and promenade. The hotel could use some renovation and painting but the rooms were clean with all facilities and had parking. A very good breakfast buffet is offered and evening meals are delicious with several choices and daily specials. Cost was 120 DM (\$80) double B&B.

We did not know the beach was swimwear optional and about half the bathers, regardless of age, were *au naturel*.

After a couple of days of eye strain we headed for the island of Rügen

Continued on page 6...

READERS' FORUM

Continued from page 3

where we had read and heard much about the east coast's white cliffs. We selected the **Villa Aegir** (Sassnitz, D-18546, Mittelstr. 5, tel. 38392/33002, fax 38392/33046). It overlooks the small harbor but has a rear/side view of some industrial buildings so the best view is definitely long range out to sea. Buffet breakfast and evening meal was good and room cost was 170 DM (\$113) double B&B. This is a Ring Hotel and very well kept.

Our next destination, Berlin, has quickly become our favorite city in Europe. This is partly because we lived as Berliners for a week in the city's Schöneberg neighborhood where **Dr. L. Schnitzer** (Belziger Str. 21, tel./fax 49-30/787-4772) has two modern, clean, quiet and comfortable apartments she rents for 100 DM (\$67) per night (minimum one week), a real bargain for Berlin. The neighborhood offers an abundance of small ethnic restaurants as well as grocers, bakeries and other shops. The Eisenacher U-bahn station is a 3-5 minute walk making all of Berlin easily accessible (another bargain is the 7-day pass for 40 DM/\$27) per person). Each apartment has a fully equipped kitchen, full bath and a generous bedroom/sitting room. Dr. Schnitzer led us to the car rental office to return our car and took us back again when we left town. We will certainly reserve one of her apartments for our next visit to Berlin.

The museums, shopping, diversity and energy of Berlin is fantastic. We only partly covered the sights in the *Michelin Green Guide for Germany* so I can foresee several more visits to this exciting city.

In Bautzen we stayed at the **Hotel Husarenhof** (Kathe-Kolwitz Platz 1, tel. 3591/530205, fax 3591/530330) for 120 DM (\$80) double B&B. This city has a dramatic setting and is a jewel in the rough. It is east of Dresden on the road toward Gorlitz.

Almost on the German-Czech-Polish border is the **Zum Hochwalder Blick** (Kamrnstr. 13, tel. 35844/7160, fax. 35844/71651) about 12 km south of Zittau in the village of Luckendorf. This hotel has fine views over the area

and charges 130 DM (\$87) for a double room B&B.

A return to **Landhotel zu Heidelberg** (Hauptstr. 196, tel. 37362/83227 fax. 37362/7201) in the woodcraft village of Seiffen was not a disappointment. Very comfortable rooms in a year-old facility and excellent food make a shopping trip to Seiffen irresistible. The Familie Krallert have done a great job with this small hotel and are rapidly gaining new customers.

Back in Berlin to return a rental car we stayed at the **Rheinsberg am See** (Finsterwalder Str. 64, tel. 30/4021002, fax 30/4035057) for a night. We selected this hotel from the *Michelin Red Guide* seeing it had both an outdoor and indoor pool. It turned out to be a be a spa-type hotel with sauna, hot-tub, fitness room and the pools. No clothing is worn in these facilities except for a towel when going from place to place. A private outdoor sunning area is also available. The hotel has a quiet setting on a lake in the city for only 199 DM (\$133) double B&B. This is also a place we will return to as the breakfast buffet and evening meals were wonderful — plus there is free parking.

Still one of Germany's best bargains is **Gasthof Zum Schwan** (Hartershofen 34, tel. 9861/33 87) in the village of Hartershofen off Highway B25 about 5 km north of Rothenburg o.d. Tauber, then turn east at Steinsfeld for 1.5 km. The price this year was up a whole 2 DM to 80 DM (\$53) double B&B but they have added a delightful breakfast buffet. The friendly Familie Schumann works hard to be sure your stay is a pleasant one. We have been here many times. This year we and other American couples staying at the hotel agreed that its dinners are among Germany's very best for taste and price.

To visit Bad Wimpfen and the Neckar River valley we stayed at the **Hotel Wilder Mann** (Hauptstr. 22, Tel. 6261/62091, fax 6261/7803) in the village of Obrigheim near the town of Mosbach. This modern hotel has a sauna and heated indoor pool. The comfortable rooms are decorated with painted furniture of the old German style. The owner is obviously fond of hunting and the hotel is like a museum of mounted hunting trophies

from around the world.

For the third year in a row we chose the **Hotel Waldesruh** (Am Bessunger Forst 28-uber Waldstr, tel. 6151/14087, fax 6151/144396, doubles 130 DM/\$87) in the Darmstadt suburb of Mühlthal-Trautheim for our final night stop. The food here is excellent and a very generous breakfast buffet is offered. They have a small heated indoor pool for relaxation before the flight home and the Frankfurt airport can be reached in about 45 minutes. There is an Autobahn stop between Darmstadt and the airport if you have to fill the gas tank of a rental car.

My last bit of information may not be of interest unless one is a "car nut" as I have been most of my life. I will probably never own a Porsche 911 but it has been a fantasy of mine to

I will probably never own a Porsche 911 but it has been a fantasy of mine to drive the autobahn and Germany's twisting back roads in this dream machine.

drive the autobahn and some of Germany's twisting back roads in this dream machine. While in Berlin we decided to see if there would be the chance of renting perhaps a used Porsche for some future trip. An inquiry at the Porsche Zentrum dealership resulted in the discovery that Porsche had just (June 1, 1996) entered into an agreement with Avis to rent NEW 911s. Vehicles must be returned to the point of origin and two credit cards are required for a contract. The price is 249 DM (\$166) per day or 1249 DM (\$833) per week plus 69 DM (\$46) per day insurance. The one month rate is 4990 DM (\$3,327) including insurance. We quickly rearranged our itinerary and had a beautiful, new, black 911 Carrera for a week—WUNDERBAR!! I couldn't quite keep the kilometers to the free 1200 allowed but they apparently did not charge for the extra 130 kms. The silly grin on my face may be permanent!!!

Sharon & Nelson Helm, Grand Island NE ☐

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 2

a cabin for the night. This proved to be another fantastic bargain. Our unit was about eight feet by 10 feet with two bunks (four beds) and a table and cost 15 DM (\$10) per person per night plus 2 DM (\$1.33) to park the car. Haide Heidelberg is located on the north bank of the Neckar River, about a 15-minute drive east of Heidelberg.

Heidelberg

We drove into the city to explore and walk the famous Hauptstrasse where we noticed many of the same stores we see in San Francisco.

For dinner we chose **Gaststätte Essighaus**, Plöck 97. The guidebook *Let's Go Germany* recommends it and we echo their sentiments. The service was quick and friendly and the food was traditional German fare: soup, salad and entree for about 12 DM (\$8)! At the bar were several German men who consumed beer after beer while watching the German First Division football (soccer) teams Karlsruhe vs. Kaiserslautern on the TV. We were fortunate enough to be sitting within eyeshot ourselves. Our meal consisted of noodle soup and an enormous green salad followed by main dishes. Margaret had *Wienerschnitzel mit Pommes Frites* and I savored a pork *Cordon Bleu* with a cold potato salad, it was all very good. After dinner we remained for more beer, coffee and the end of the *Füßball* match. The total for dinner and drinks was 53 DM (\$35). We then cruised the Hauptstrasse under light drizzle, had a little ice cream and returned to camp.

On day five we left Heidelberg for Freiburg via the Schwarzwaldhochstrasse (Black Forest Crest Road) which traversed some of the most beautiful scenery of the trip. However, as pointed out in *Let's Go Germany*, the corrosion of the forest from acid rain is very evident.

In Freiburg we had trouble finding a place to camp. Signs for campgrounds can usually be seen exiting the Autobahn, but in Freiburg this was not the case. By the time we found a place and set up camp we were starving for dinner. Without the patience to be choosy we consulted our *Let's Go* 'bible' which had come through on previous occasions. Not this time. **Laubfrosch** (Kaiser-Josefstrasse 273) was recommended for pizza and pasta and the guide claims "the goods are served up with a flair in a half-timbered dining room." We would have to disagree. We found the service cold and inattentive and more importantly the pizza was an unappetizing mash of cheese and uncooked dough.

Camping at Freiburg was only 10 DM (\$6.67) per person and 2 DM (\$1.33) per car.

Interlaken

Fed up with three straight days of rain, we decided to head for Interlaken, Switzerland, in hopes of better weather. We arrived to find warm sunny weather which soon turned cloudless and hot. With it's jaw-dropping beauty, Interlaken is the most scenic place I have ever visited. The mountains plunge from the sky to form the banks of the two lakes, the Thunersee and Brienersee.

Our home for the next three days was **Camping Jungfraublick**, a five-minute bus ride from town and the best of the trip; flat, soft, green grass like a park. Our host was a nice man who worked hard to keep his campground in good shape. He has no help, he does it all. Because of this, his store is only open a few hours a day, or when he

our last dinner "out" in Interlaken. For the next two nights we purchased whole roasted chickens from the Co-op market. This was a key discovery, we enjoyed delicious roasted chicken and beer for one-third the cost of dinner at Pizza Horn!

After dinner we took a breathtaking drive west along the north shore of the Thunersee. As the sun set over the mountains we drove through the tunnels and under the rocks as the road snaked its way to Thun.

Next day we validated our Swiss Passes and rode the train up to Wengen. With a picnic lunch in our backpack, we hiked our way down from Wengen to Lauterbrunnen. The peaceful quiet of a mountain town with no cars, combined with awe-inspiring views of the valley below make Wengen a special mountain getaway. After the short one-hour hike down the mountain and experiencing the Swiss trail system, we wished we had more time to explore the Jungfrau Region.

Ripped Off

On day nine we awoke, showered, wrote a few post cards and shopped for breakfast and lunch (under 20 Sfr/\$16). Our pack was stocked for the day, we walked to Interlaken West station and caught a train to Lausanne via Bern. The trip was about 3.5 hours, the beautiful scenery whizzed by and the first-class cars were quite comfortable.

In Lausanne, we walked to the park at the edge of Lac Léman (Lake Geneva) where we ate lunch and were deceived — by the ice cream man! When we asked for two small cones the man running the stand gave us a choice by holding up two empty cones. I pointed at the smaller of the two and he filled our order. When I plunked down 5 Sfr. (\$4), the price shown on his sign, he asked for seven francs. "Aren't these 2.50 francs each?" I replied. He then pulled out an even smaller cone and proclaimed, "this one is 2.50 francs." With a smile and shake

of the head we paid the two additional francs — a total of \$5.60 for two tiny cones — and went on our way.

On the grounds of the **Olympic Museum** we were fortunate to view a free gymnastics demonstration. Perhaps a dozen Olympic gymnasts, both women and men, performed three to four minute exercises on the trampoline. Watch out Air Jordan! Back in Interlaken, we hit the Co-op, bought a bird and then rushed to the only store in town which sells cold beer to go, a souvenir shop on Hoheweg. It has a cold-box on the sidewalk containing, yes, COLD BEER! We had five minutes to catch the bus back to camp if we wanted hot chicken and cold beer rather than cold chicken and hot beer. We made it and enjoyed our dinner on a blanket while watching parachutists fall from the sky.

Continued on page 8...

Andy's Camping Dos and Don'ts

Do take a quality tent with a rainfly. Expect rain when camping in Europe. Sure, you only need a two-person tent, but when it rains you'll want room to move about.

Things like getting dressed and playing cards or scrabble are tough to do in a two-person tent.

Don't move too often: Choose central locations with day-trip possibilities and stay at least three days.

Do plan some hotel or pension stays, particularly on travel days. It is easier to have a room waiting for you.

Don't expect to see as much as if you were staying in hotels: Camping takes extra time; with setup, breakdown, shopping and laundry there is a lot to do.

Do budget between \$100 and \$200/day for two people. At \$100/day (our budget which included *everything* except airfare) a couple can live quite well. \$150/day means lunch out and other extras. At \$200/day, by camping standards, you're royalty!

Don't plan scenic drives or day-trips on moving days unless you have planned for a first night hotel at your next destination. With campsite breakdown, the drive to your next stop, meals, finding a campground you like and setting up, you'll have a full day.

Do have a rewarding and affordable vacation. Happy camping!

can be flagged down from his riding mower. There were many showers and toilets and all were extremely clean. There was never a wait for a shower and hot water was free. We paid 7.70 Sfr. per person per night and 4 Sfr. for the tent, a total of 19.4 Sfr. (\$16).

Our only Interlaken restaurant meal was at **Pizza Horn** on Reckweg, which was a bit pricey for a pizza restaurant. Pizzas were cooked in a brick oven in the dining room. Despite its name, Pizza Horn also serves such delicacies as lamb chops broiled in the brick oven. We watched as friends of the owner were served the lamb and each plate was piled high with four juicy chops cooked to perfection. We paid 64 Sfr. (\$51) for two very good pizzas, salad and two beers each. Since we were on a tight budget, we decided this would be

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 2

On day 10, we left Interlaken for Garmisch-Partenkirchen, another town with few signs to campgrounds but which makes up for it with other delights.

Garmisch-Partenkirchen Camping Zugspitze,

Griesenerstrasse 4, in Grainau very near Garmisch-Partenkirchen, occupies a scenic spot at the foot of the Zugspitze and is the most expensive campground we visited. We paid 7.50 DM (\$5) per person, 10 DM (\$6.67) per site, 5 DM (\$3.33) per car, plus an additional 1.70 DM (\$1.13) Grainau *Kurtax* for a total of 31.70 DM (\$21) per night. Still, it's a good deal, especially when compared to prices of pensions in the GAP area. Youth hostels are priced about the same as Camping Zugspitze but the campground folks will wash your clothes for a mere 10 DM (\$6.67), a small price for the time saved!

Our first dinner in GAP was at **Flösserstuben**, Schmiedstrasse 2. The service was pleasant, the food plentiful and very good. The wood-trimmed dining room with wooden booths is comfortable and intimate. Margaret had pasta with mushroom sauce, while I enjoyed a tender pork chop smothered in a sauce of sautéed mushrooms. Dinner was 62 DM (\$41), including several beers.

The Fraundorfer

On Saturday morning, since stores would be closed until Monday, we shopped. Later we visited in the Olympic Ski Stadium and then took a short but sweet hike through the Partnachklamm. The big event of the day, however, was dinner at **Gasthof Fraundorfer**, which we had heard so much about for so many years. We were seated at a small table for four with a local couple. Everyone was a bit self-conscious while we dined, but once the dinner plates had been cleared the smiles and glances became conversation and laughter. We discussed beer, cars, holidays, *Füßball* and other important issues of the world. We bought each other beer and *Schnaps* and sang and danced until the last beer was poured and the Fraundorfer went to sleep for the night.

Day 12 was one of recovery from the "Fraundorfer Hangover." That night we ate in a restaurant a

few doors down from the Fraundorfer. It paled in comparison. The greeter/server/bartender had so much to do it was nearly impossible to get his attention. The food was decent but the service failed.

Munich

Next morning we packed up our camp, made a quick stop at the *Bäckerei* for breakfast, and set out for Munich and the **Pension am Kaiserplatz**, Kaiserplatz 12. Recommended by *Let's Go Germany*, this hotel was perfect for us. Located just three blocks from Leopoldstrasse and the underground, we were able to park the car free for the duration of our stay. Our room at the pension had a large window facing a courtyard which made for peaceful, quiet nights. The rooms had high ceilings, down comforters and pillows, a sink and a place to sit and enjoy breakfast which was delivered to the room. Shower and toilet are down the hall and kept in immaculate condition. After camping for 14 consecutive days walking down the hall to the bathroom is no problem. At least you don't need an umbrella! A double room here was 79 DM (\$53) per night including breakfast.

After an indifferent dinner at **Cafe Italian** on Leopoldstr. we had a hankerin' for some heapin' helpings of Bavarian food. We chose the **Augustiner Bräustuben**, Landsbergerstrasse 19 (not to be confused with the famous Augustiner Gastätten on Neuhauser Str., near the Marienplatz). Food and service were excellent and the price of dinner for two is unbeatable. Margaret had a roast pork dish and I inhaled a delicious grilled steak with an enormous green salad. Beer was 3.90 DM (\$2.60) per half litre and the total for our dinner, including beer, was a reasonable 51 DM (\$33).

Day 14 began with breakfast in our room consisting of soft boiled eggs, rolls with butter and jam and coffee. Then, at the nearby U-Bahn station, we purchased a 24-hour companion ticket which cost 12 DM (\$8) and is good for two persons until 6 a.m. the following day.

On our last day in Munich we visited the **BMW Museum**, a great deal at 5.50 DM (\$3.65). Headphones with English narration are included in the admission fee. The bargain at the BMW Museum was put into perspective when we walked to the nearby **Olympic Complex** where one must

pay 3 DM (\$2) just to walk into the stadium! No tour, no narration, just 50,000 empty seats. I wanted to snap a photo of the soccer field where Bayern München plays its home matches but decided to save my marks.

Home

That night, at a small cafe a few blocks from our hotel, we ate pasta and raised our glasses in celebration of a great trip.

Day 16 started early with the packing of bags and the car. At Munich's Franz-Josef-Strauss Airport we pulled into the rental car drop-off garage, took care of the paperwork and headed to the terminal to catch our plane. A short 15 hours later, we were home. — Andy Bestor

EUROPE TRAVEL BRIEFS

Swissair Packages

This year **Swissair** offers a wide choice of Swiss vacation packages. For example, their *Air + Land Best Buys* package combines air and land costs and allows travelers to custom-design their vacation. Prices start at \$1,012 for the packages which include:

Round-trip economy class airfare on Swissair to Zürich or Geneva; six nights at selected three and four-star hotels; continental or buffet breakfast; one week car rental with unlimited mileage or, with a \$113 supplement, eight-day Swiss Rail Pass (2nd Class).

For full details on the Swissair program call 800-688-7947 for a free *Look no further. Switzerland. Vacation Planner*. The planner includes information on various hotel voucher programs, car rentals and rail passes.

Customers who book one of the *Look no further. Switzerland.* packages receive a voucher booklet good for discounts and freebies from various Swiss resorts, hotels, museums and shops.

Also available is the *Swiss Travel Invention*, a prepaid hotel voucher program that provides a choice of Swiss hotels in seven price categories starting at \$43 per person, per night, double occupancy, including breakfast. Unused vouchers are fully refundable.

The program is effective through October 31, 1996. Contact your travel agent or phone Swisspak at 800-688-7947.

Cheap Fares

LTU International Airways has announced discounted roundtrip fares from Florida and California to Germany. They are available to LTU's main German gateways, Düsseldorf, Munich and Hamburg, and to Frankfurt from Florida via LTU's Sky Shuttle motor coach service between Düsseldorf and Frankfurt airports.

For departures between September 16 and October 31, 1996, roundtrip fares from Miami, Orlando, Ft. Myers and Daytona Beach are \$498. For October 1 to October 31 departures roundtrip fares from Los Angeles and San Francisco are \$458. San Francisco departure dates are limited to October 2, 9 and 16, with returns by October 16. Returns to California after October 16 will be into Los Angeles. Restrictions apply and seats are limited. The sale ends August 15 though similar fares for winter travel are expected to be announced later.

Other LTU news: Beginning in November, LTU will offer on-line connections to Berlin from all its North American gateways...Connections to Stuttgart will also be implemented on flights from Los Angeles, Ft. Myers and Orlando...LTU's seasonal service from New York has been extended and will now operate through December 20, 1996...The airline has a new Boeing 767-300ER giving its aircraft fleet average age of 4.6 years. To book phone 800-888-0200.

Christmas Markets

DER Tours has announced its **1996 Christmas Markets** package. The tours begin in Munich on November 30 and December 7 and include: six nights "first class" hotel accommodations; breakfast; welcome reception; farewell dinner; Munich tour; Excursion to Linderhof Castle and Oberammergau; excursions to Rothenburg, Salzburg and Nürnberg including Christmas market visits and city tours; English-speaking guide and all entrance fees. Airfare is not included. The per person, double occupancy price is \$698 for the **Hotel Europa** and \$738 at the **Regent Hotel**.

Book through a travel agent or call 800-521-6722.